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THE WAR

AS VIEWED BY A LIBERAL ENGLISHMAN

(With some special words to
"German-Americans" and "Pacifists")

BY

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FOREWORD.

The following pages were given, in the form of a Lecture, at Cornell University, on October 30th, 1917. This may serve to explain the direct method of address frequently adopted.

H. S. PERRIS.

New York, November, 1917.

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THE WAR

As viewed by a Liberal Englishman.

"DRUM-TAPS" FOR PEACE.

I have had many years' experience of work for International Peace,—and I do not regret one of them. With voice and pen I have labored and pleaded for many years for a method of adjusting the differences between nations without recourse to the sword. I have attended, spoken at, and helped to organize many peace-meetings, conferences, and congresses; and have assisted in welcoming and entertaining in London delegations of German burgomasters, pastors and workmen, when they came there on an errand of conciliation and concord. I regret nothing of all this work, and adhere still to the principles I then held.

But from the day when Germany, in August 1914, violated the neutrality of Belgium and commenced her assault upon the peace and liberties of Europe and the world, I realized (as did almost the whole of my countrymen) that "peace-talk" was of no avail at such a moment,—in such an emergency; and that for the sake of that very Peace we loved and wished to preserve,—a Peace founded in justice and freedom, and buttressed with fair-dealing and honor,—the aggressor must be opposed by the only weapon he could understand; and that for the time being (and by no choice of ours) the force of argument must be supplemented, protected, and vindicated by the argument of force.

And so, though all my previous interests and occupations had been alien to war and war-making, I came to recognize that, like Walt Whitman in his "Drum-Taps," I must say:

In peace I chanted peace; but now the drum of war is
mine,
War, red war is my Song through your streets, O city!

Now I imagine that, in this respect, my point of view is very similar to that of many Americans. I believe that a complete and final victory

over Germany and her allies in this war is a necessary, however costly, prelude to any further advance along the road of international pacification. In this sense I accept as valid the famous phrase of Mr. H. G. Wells that this is a "war to end War." This thought is worth a brief examination.

THE PEACE-RECORD OF THE ENGLISH-SPEAKING PEOPLES.

I claim that the American and British peoples have well proved their right to use this expression, and to describe the War in these terms.

From the time when the modern process of international arbitration began, in 1794, until the end of the 19th century, the United States and Great Britain had more frequently taken their various international disputes before an impartial Tribunal of Arbitration than any other of the Great Powers. Senator La Fontaine, in his "*Histoire Sommaire des Arbitrages Internationaux*," says that they did this 126 times, thus "giving a magnificent example to the world."

Before the outbreak of the war powerful and representative national committees in the United States, England, and Canada had been busily preparing to celebrate the completion, on Christmas Eve, 1914, of One Hundred Years of Peace among English-speaking peoples. This hundred years' peace had been one long series of triumphs of the arts of conciliation and constructive pacification. One has only to mention the bloodless settlement of the Maine Boundary dispute in 1842, of the Oregon Boundary dispute in 1846, of the "Trent" and "Alabama" affairs arising out of the Civil War, of the Behring Sea quarrel and the Venezuela incident,—and above all, to call as witness the disarmament (ever since the Rush-Bagot Agreement of 1817) of the 3,840 miles of land and water frontier stretching between Canada and the United States,—to realize the governing motives and desires for peace of the two great branches of the English-speaking peoples.

Neither England nor America desired this war, prepared for it, or precipitated it. Having been forced into it by the ruthless aggression and shameless conduct of Germany, they will fight it through to a decisive and victorious conclusion in

the name of treaty-faith and international honor, and for the sake of peace itself. That the nations should have to tread the bloody path of this *via dolorosa* is not the fault of the English-speaking peoples, which had proved by acts their desire for a better way to peace.

A WAR FOR THE FUTURE OF DEMOCRACY.

But this war is not only, as Mr. Wells called it, a "war to end War." It is also, as President Wilson has pointed out, a war "to make the world safe for democracy." It is a war against the last strong citadels of feudalism and autocracy in old Europe. Since the fall of Czardom in Russia this meaning of the great conflict has become increasingly plain. What a debt of just vengeance the world owes to the Kaiser, to "King Fox" of Bulgaria, to Constantine, and to the little clique of Turks who "run" the impotent Sultan! On Constantine punishment has fallen. Death has taken the Austrian Emperor to be judged by a Higher Court. Does anyone doubt that William of Hohenzollern, and Ferdinand, and the blood-stained gang at Constantinople will meet their due deserts?

The question remains: Can the democracies "make good" in this vast struggle?

This much, at least, is certain, that glorious France and chivalrous and indomitable England have already proved that they can stand the test. And it is just these two ancient countries, full of years, achievements, and experience, yet ever young for liberty, that have taught the world the idea and content of democracy.

Russia has caught the contagion of freedom, but must get through its period of high fever before it can fully take its destined part, and "pull its weight" in the final struggle.

And now, to the joy of all free peoples the world over, the great American democracy has stepped into the ring. In intervening, you Americans have broken through all your earlier political traditions. And of necessity. In the world of to-day a thousand discoveries are helping us to realize that as nations, as well as in our individual capacity, "we are members one of another."

The "glorious isolation" which was prudent and natural in the past is to-day neither possible

nor desirable. Americans are fulfilling their national destiny by grappling boldly with their international duties and realizing their proper international affiliations.

Your period as colonies of the Mother Country may be called your period of Dependence.

From the Revolution until the spring of the present year was your second stage of growth,—the period of Independence.

From April 2nd, 1917, will be dated your period of Inter-Dependence.

Yes! is it not true of nations, as of individuals, that "all the body is fitly framed and knit together by that which every joint supplieth" and that it is only by "the working together of each several part" that the countries of the world can ever fulfill their mighty destiny of becoming "the kingdoms of our God and of His Christ"?

And so it is that, just as the Declaration of Independence launched the great American nation upon its separate career, so President Wilson's address to Congress of April 2nd, 1917, was, in effect, the beginning of an even higher and riper stage of manhood for this nation,—its Declaration of Inter-Dependence,—its hand-clasp to democracy and freedom everywhere,—its trumpet-call to a united assault upon the last entrenchments of that Imperialism which dared, even in this 20th century, to threaten the liberties of mankind.

A WORD TO AMERICANS OF GERMAN BIRTH.

At this point I would ask leave, as a Liberal Englishman, to offer some remarks to any Americans who may be of Germanic origins or affiliation. It is of vast importance, not only for themselves, but for America and the world, that they should realize clearly the issues involved in the present war. I want them to ask themselves this question: *Which Germany is it that you love?*

Is it the Germany of Goethe and Schiller, of Kant and Beethoven? If so, be assured that the world has no quarrel with the Germany of real "culture"; with the Germany of liberal and human outlook and sympathies, the mother of modern song, the Germany of sweet home-life, of industrious research, of solid scientific and intellectual attainment, of commercial enterprise and civic initiative. This Germany commands nothing

but the respect and admiration of thoughtful Englishmen and Americans,—indeed, of liberal-minded men and women the world over. *With this Germany we are not at war*, and have no desire or intention of being.

But in the last half-century a new Germany—a Germany under Prussian domination, has taken shape; and it is this new and terrible portent of a Prussianized German Empire, acting as the Bully of Europe and the Disturber of the World's Peace, that has ranged against itself and its dependents and adherents almost the whole civilized world.

A brilliant American writer, Mr. Owen Wister, has well described this process of national corruption and degeneration. "Prussia," he says, "put its uniform not only on German bodies but on their brains. Literature and music grew sterilized. Scientific eminence degenerated.... Out of the fumes emerged three colossal shapes: the Super-man, the Super-race, and the Super-state—the new Trinity of German worship." "During forty years," adds Mr. Wister, "Germany sat within her wall, learning and repeating Prussian incantations."

Now it is this Germany—a militarized and anti-democratic machine, with its absurd Kaiser mouthing the words of mediæval monarchy by divine right, rattling its sabre, bursting with nationalist egotism, straddling right across the path of aspiring and constructive internationalist effort,—that was justly feared and distrusted before July, 1914, and that in that fateful month, urged by the relentless logic of its creed and the imperious pride of its military caste, plunged Europe and the world into this most terrible and devastating war.

And this is not the Germany with which Americans of Teutonic origins or affiliations can afford to sympathize—if they wish to remain loyal Americans and intelligent citizens of the world.

At this crisis in the history of civilization it is necessary that the distinction which I have just drawn should be recognized with courage and decision.

The civilized world has no quarrel with the first Germany of which I have spoken; but, be assured, it will never make peace with the second.

To which allegiance are you going to pledge yourself? What peace or accommodation can

there be, in the nature of things, between Prussianism as we have seen it at work in Belgium, in France, in Russia, in the Balkans, in Armenia, during the present war,—and the principles and ideals, the constitutional habits and liberties, upon which is built this great American commonwealth,—which has given you welcome, sheltered you, and to which your pledged and grateful loyalty are due?

In the English "Contemporary Review" for April, 1916, I wrote the following words; and, though torrents of the blood of our brave British lads have been shed since then, in this war against German aggression, I would not, to-day, take back one single word:

"Would that in Germany some glimmering of the dawn of a new and better day would manifest itself! We cannot if we would, and we would not if we could, blot the German people from the map of Europe. When the last shot has been fired, some fifty or sixty millions of them will remain; and the world will be better and happier if we can live with them in peace instead of anger. We will fight until we conquer them, because we believe that our cause is just, and that they are the victims of an intolerable oppression which threatens the liberties of Europe and of the whole world, and that this monster can only be overthrown by the destruction of its power and prestige by force of arms. But we will not hate the people. The day is coming when they will be redeemed from the yoke of the militarist, when the creed of Force which they have been taught to repeat will become so loathsome to them that they will not let it pass their lips.

"Our English historian Green taught us that 'for the fatherland of the English race we must look far away from England itself'—to the Teuton lands and marshes about the mouths of the Weser and Elbe. When this tumult is over, we shall remember that we were intended to be brethren, comrades. And this dream will come true, if, pondering with aching hearts the meaning and causation of this present war, we resolve to have done with the errors of the past, and to commence the rebuilding of Europe in accordance with the ripest judgment, the soundest deductive faculty, the most courageous constructive statesmanship, that society can summon to achieve its redemption."

But the war is not yet won: and it must be won, at whatever cost, and the aggression of Prussian imperialism—the whole godless doctrine of militarism of which the German government and the German army have been and remain the chief expression and champion—must be finally defeated and overthrown. Not only the fate of democracy, but the future of civilization,—the very opportunity of a just and stable pacification of the world—is at stake in this contest; and there can be no terms of accommodation until the final victory of right has been registered and the German people themselves, as well as the rest of mankind, have been freed for ever from this accursed creed of Moioch to which they have submitted themselves in bondage, and which has plunged the whole world into a hell of carnage, devastation, and misery.

And so the call comes to all true Americans of German origin to realize clearly in their own mind and conscience the dread summons of duty which has sounded for them, and the solemn alternative from which there can be no escape.

So far as I know it has never been more clearly stated than by a well-known American—Mr. Otto Kahn, who is himself of German origin and who knows Germany well. His words,—for which I venture, with sincere admiration and respect, to thank him, are as follows:

“As Washington led Americans of British blood to fight against Great Britain, as Lincoln called upon Americans of the North to fight their very brothers of the South, so Americans of German descent are now summoned to join in our country’s righteous struggle against a people of their own blood, which under the evil spell of a dreadful obsession, and, Heaven knows, through no fault of ours, has made itself the enemy of this peace-loving nation, as it is the enemy of peace and right and freedom throughout the world.

“To gain America’s independence, to defeat oppression and tyranny, was indeed to gain a great cause.

“To preserve the Union, to eradicate slavery, was perhaps a greater still.

“To defend the very foundations of liberty and humanity, the very groundwork of fair dealing between nations, the very basis of peaceable living together among the peoples of the earth against

the fierce and brutal onslaught of ruthless, lawless, faithless might; to spend the lives and the fortunes of this generation so that our descendants may be freed from the dreadful calamity of war and the fear of war, so that the energies and billions of treasure now devoted to plans and instruments of destruction may be given henceforth to fruitful works of peace and progress and to the betterment of the conditions of the people, that is the highest cause for which any people ever unsheathed its sword."

THE UNITED STATES IN THE WAR.

But it is time to turn to the actual course of the Great War in Europe. Your country has now reached the stage of action, and we are all watching, with thrilled and painful interest, the critical moments of the great struggle.

I will not attempt to speak to you of its awful horrors, its incredible sufferings, the unimaginable losses in blood and treasure that it has caused.

I would rather turn your thoughts to its duties, and to its heroisms; and pay my humble and heartfelt tribute to the gallant soldiers and sailors, the devoted and self-sacrificing home workers, the women-watchers and helpers, who for three long years and more have borne the burden of this cruel and devastating conflict.

Now you Americans, too, have come to share these sorrows and sacrifices; to lay your gift, by the side of those of England, France and their allies, on the altar of freedom and justice.

For many in this country it is a time of sad partings and eager expectancy, as your lads sail across the ocean on their brave and venturesome crusade. We, English, too, have passed through this phase, and can feel with you. From what sources will you Americans draw faith and courage for the days of testing that now await you?

First of all, I think, from a sense of *the justice of your cause*.

I need not again enter into the question of the origin of this war. The case has been fully and freely tried before the court of your public opinion, and the verdict has been given. "*Securus judicat orbis terrarum*." The American people,

like the British and French people, are resolved that the Prussianism to which this world-tragedy is due must be finally defeated and overthrown, that freedom and international faith and comity may live again.

Secondly, *from the memory of your own history and traditions.*

This nation was made by a line of brave and free men. Robinson and Brewster; Raleigh and Captain John Smith; Miles Standish and Roger Williams; Winthrop and Endicott and William Penn; Washington and Lincoln—this is an heroic ancestry; and it is not to be thought of that a nation bred of such a stock should fail the cause of freedom and civilization at the hour of its direst need. Noblesse oblige! Those who best know your origins and the quality of the main stream in your blood have no fears that the American people will not play its part worthily and greatly.

Next, there is the knowledge of *your great allies in the war.*

You will be glad to stand behind and beside of gallant little Belgium. You have already, by your splendid charity, brought comfort and relief to her suffering people. Now, by your arms, you will be able to help to secure that, in the end, Belgium shall receive "beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness"; that "for her shame she shall have double; and for confusion she shall rejoice in her portion."

You will be glad to stand beside Italy. Loyal and chivalrous in her time and method of entering the war, she will be purified and strengthened by her losses and sufferings. When Garibaldi addressed his patriot followers, he did not promise them an easy march to victory, but "forced marches, short rations, bloody battles, wounds, imprisonment and death." In such a spirit Italy will again achieve her liberation, and you will be proud to help her in the task.

To convulsed and stricken Russia you will be glad, if she will let you, to bring good counsel, help, and comradeship. Unless the disease that racks her frame has struck too deep, she will do well to look for light and for disinterested friendship to free America, rather than accept the Judas-kiss of Prussia.

Belgium, Serbia, Roumania, are wounded little nations that need your help; Russia, a Samson Agonistes that your quick and liberal aid may help to rescue from the wily net in which he is enmeshed.

In France,—beautiful and indomitable France—you will have an ally by the side of whom you will feel proud and honored to stand. You will do this for the sake of the debt you owe her,—for she was probably the decisive factor in helping you to win your independence. You will do it for the sake of her sufferings. For the first two years of the war she had, for all our sakes, to bear its greatest and most terrible burden on the Western front. Never shall we forget her brave word: "They shall not pass!" You will do it, above all, for the sake of her spirit, because France is France, and the world would be infinitely poorer if the French spirit, the French intellect, French style, were lost to it, and France's beautiful and hallowed soil polluted longer by the tread of the jack-boot of the Prussian bully. In her case, too, we must build the old wastes, raise up the old desolations, and repair the waste cities. France must be given the power to rise again, stronger and more beautiful than ever, from this long and bitter day of grief and sacrifice, that she may help to shape and guide and inspire the new world that is to be.

And, lastly, you Americans will have as your ally old England, the motherland of liberty, the founder of a world-wide commonwealth of free nations, the age-long champion of freedom against tyranny. What joy it is to find Britain and America comrades in arms for a great and unselfish cause! What promise for the future this sacred reunion contains!

In a remarkable book on "England and the War" by a Frenchman, André Chevrillon, the author draws a vivid picture of the awakening of the English people to their task and their duty in the early months of the war. "England's awakening," he writes, "to the unexpected and tremendous realities of the war; her gradual discovery of her enemy's deadly hatred and purpose; the rising and spreading of the idea that in time of national peril military service is a duty of every able-bodied Englishman; the appeal to the individual conscience; the working of the mind which resulted in millions voluntarily taking

the pledge (to serve); the dead-weight of old traditions, habits and prejudices; the cross and counter-currents of class and party ideas; finally, the fusion of all tendencies into one collective will and movement. . . . ; such facts belong to the spiritual order, to that life of the soul from which spring all the material acts and productions of man."

Speaking of the poster-appeals for volunteers for the Kitchener armies in England, M. Chevrillon says: "The feeling of imperative duty is the suggestion aimed at by all these pictures, that form a matchless document on the inner nature of the English soul. . . . The English character is a combination of will and conscience: the inviolable will of the individual who has sole control of himself; the conscience which meditates in silence, stirs to action, and ordains the sacrifice."

What a part the free peoples of the British Commonwealth of Nations have played and are playing, by sea and by land in this record-breaking contest! No honest and observant person can speak of Britain's record with any other feeling than that of amazement at the grandeur of her uprising, admiration of her mighty efforts and sacrifices, and gratitude that once again, as formerly in the struggle against Napoleon, England has stood in the breach at a critical hour for the world's civilization, has not shrunk from gathering the sharpest spears of the foe into her own breast, and has gained time until the forces of great America shall be gathered which shall help finally to strike down the foe that has threatened and endangered liberty and democracy throughout the world.

In thus once more saving Europe by her exertions and example, England has incurred the bitter hatred of the War Lords. But she has been able the more easily to bear this, knowing that, from the best American hearts, there has been an upsurging of brotherly affection for her, —a strengthening and stimulating memory of kinship, in blood, institutions, and ideals which bridges the separating ocean, and draws the English-speaking peoples together in these days of common suffering and danger. To the German "Hymn of Hate," such an American (I would like to grasp his hand!) replied as follows:

THE HYMN OF LOVE.

(*An American Tribute to the Glory of England.*)

A song of hate is a song of Hell;
Some there be that sing it well.
Let them sing it loud and long,
We lift our hearts in a loftier song;
We lift our hearts to Heaven above,
Singing the glory of her we love—
England!

Glory of thought and glory of deed,
Glory of Hampden and Runnymede;
Glory of ships that sought far goals,
Glory of swords, and glory of souls!
Glory of songs mounting as birds,
Glory immortal of magical words;
Glory of Milton, glory of Nelson,
Tragical glory of Gordon and Scott;
Glory of Shelley, glory of Sidney,
Glory transcendent that perishes not,—
Hers is the story, hers be the glory—
England!

Shatter her beauteous breast ye may;
The spirit of England none can slay.
Dash the bomb on the Dome of St. Paul's,—
Deem ye the fame of the Admiral falls?
Pry the stone from the chancel floor,—
Dream ye that Shakespeare shall live no more?
Where is the giant shot that kills
Wordsworth walking the old green hills?
Trample the red rose on the ground,—
Keats is beauty while earth spins round!
Bind her, grind her, burn her with fire,
Cast her ashes into the sea,—
She shall escape, she shall aspire,
She shall arise to make men free;
She shall arise in sacred scorn,
Lighting the lives that are yet unborn;
Spirit supernal, splendor eternal—
England!

Americans and Englishmen alike, as they go forward with this great conflict, will be stirred and strengthened by memories of these great traditions that they have inherited, and of the sacred fires of freedom of which Providence has made them the chief guardians in this present age. Old differences and misunderstandings will be forgotten as they realize—in the fierce light of this awful struggle—how small were the things that divided, and how great are the things that unite them. And out of this recognition of their essential unity of aim and ideal will come a new hope and courage to face the difficult future.

Britons and Americans both, we must try to realize that this war is, properly regarded, a

divine judgment day,—a veritable Day of the Lord. In the crucible of this war the future of your children and children's children,—as of ours in old Europe,—is being fashioned. Blood and tears the war will cost you in abundance, and you will not shrink from adding yours to that which has already been shed. The main thing is that we should be assured that God is “trampling out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored,” and that “His truth is marching on.”

Certain it is that our cause is so sacred that we must and will endure to the end. Liberty is a costly treasure to purchase and to hold. Old tyrannies are not cheaply to be overthrown. Redemption means much shedding of precious blood. But there will be no faltering when once the meaning and purpose of it all is understood.

He hath sounded forth the trumpet that shall never call
retreat;

He is sifting out the hearts of men before His judgment
seat;

O! be swift, my soul to answer Him! be jubilant my
feet!

Our God is marching on!

In the spirit and under the inspiration of those noble words your fathers struck down slavery on this American continent.

In the same spirit you are coming now to join Great Britain and France in the heavy but sublime task of freeing Europe and the world from a form of slavery worse because more insidious,—slavery to the dogmas and practice of a ruthless militarism and Cæsarism.

Properly understood this great venture of ours is a necessary preliminary to that subsequent Healing of the Nations which is the deep desire of all our hearts.

And, believing this, I say—lover of peace as I am—“God speed America's arms in this war! God hasten and complete the victory of our righteous cause!”

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